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From Special Needs Coordinator to Care Coordinator: An Educational Training Program

ABSTRACT

Every child has desires, hopes, and needs; every child is special. So, let's stop talking about special needs children as if they are separate from others. Words make worlds, as social constructionists put it.

This workshop draws from a case study in the republic of Surinam. Specifically, we mounted a teacher's training program that shifted the focus from "special needs" to "taking care for all children." Further, we shifted from an individualistic orientation to education to a relational perspective. After two years of piloting, a training program for Care Coordinators was established.

In this workshop, we will feature key elements of this program, emphasizing as it did, the development of social learning and relational practices. Ultimately this training brought about structural changes in the Surinamese educational system. As we found, the program not only changed children's lives, but as well both the professional and private lives of the teachers. Even today graduate students meet voluntarily to create more hopeful futures for children in their schools.